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Rural Arts and Culture Summit Provided Artistic Engagement and Development

Summary: The 2013 Rural Arts and Culture Summit featured artists, rural leaders.

(June 20, 2013)-The University of Minnesota, Morris's Center for Small Towns (CST) and Springboard for the Arts co-hosted the 2013 Rural Arts and Culture (RAC) Summit June 5-6 on the Morris campus. The summit attracted artists, arts and culture organizations, and leaders from around the region. Attendees immersed themselves in various seminars on how to best mobilize arts and culture to create and sustain vitality in rural areas.

The summit featured a number of keynote speakers. John Davis, founder of the New York Mills Regional Cultural Center and the Kids Philosophy Slam, began the summit with a presentation on community arts integration and creative place-making. June Holley, author of the Network Weaving Handbook and former executive director of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks, presented on weaving connections between individuals, communities, and small organizations for collaborative projects. Michael Strand, department head and professor of art at North Dakota State University, discussed how the arts can impact rural communities in new and innovative ways.

Breakout sessions were comprised of presentations and discussion panels addressing topics such as art and economic development, rural publishing, and community involvement within the arts. Attendees also participated in creative workshops spanning topics from poetry writing to bluegrass jamming.

"I am so thankful to have been given the opportunity to speak on something I care deeply about: the literary tradition of western Minnesota and the role literature can play in developing a sense of place," says Joshua Preston '13, a recent graduate and a presenter at the summit. "It empowered me to genuinely say that to be rural is...to be part of a rich tradition we can—and ought to be—proud of."

The summit also hosted a [Local Flavor](#) event, inviting participants and the community to explore local foods, arts, music, and culture. ArtOrg urged the public to participate in steamroller printing as part of the 2013 Thousand Print Summer project. Morris campus student organizations including Art Club and Crafts Club were also present, creating art projects with children and community members.

The summit closed with the Idea Harvest, a series of conversation circles. Attendees focused on engaging with art and development using knowledge gained from the summit's sessions. Examples of discussion topics created include integrating literary arts in public spaces and creating identity through music culture. Through these conversations, participants brought to light new ideas for how to better integrate rural community development with art throughout the region.

The Center for Small Towns (CST) is a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris and serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, K-12 schools, non-profit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. CST's mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its

resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Bluegrass musicians at the Local Flavor event.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.